

Amendments to the Claims

The following complete set of pending claims replaces the previous set of claims.

11. (Currently Amended) A disposable absorbent article, the article having a first waist region, a second waist region, and a crotch region positioned between the first waist region and the second waist region, the absorbent article further comprising:
- a ~~substantially fluid impervious~~ backsheet joined to a fluid pervious topsheet, the backsheet comprising a web and being substantially liquid impervious except at a first discontinuity in the web; and
 - an absorbent core disposed between the topsheet and the backsheet, the absorbent core comprising absorbent core components
- wherein a multi-layered first absorbent core component is non-removably disposed in at least the crotch region and has an acquisition layer and an acquisition/distribution layer, and at least one removable second absorbent core component is removably disposed in the first waist region and is in fluid communication with the first absorbent core component, and
- wherein the backsheet further comprises first access means for providing access to the removable second absorbent core component through the backsheet so that the removable second absorbent core component may be removed from the absorbent article through the backsheet without having to remove the absorbent article from a wearer, the first access means comprising ~~a~~ the first discontinuity in the web, the first discontinuity being positioned in the first waist region, a first recloseable flap secured over the first discontinuity, and a first fastener for recloseably joining the first flap to the backsheet.
12. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 11, wherein the acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers of the first absorbent core component comprise fibrous nonwoven materials, fibrous wet-laid web materials, open-celled polymeric foam materials, or combinations thereof.
17. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 11, wherein the second absorbent core component comprises fibrous nonwoven materials, fibrous wet-laid web materials, open-celled polymeric foam materials, absorbent gelling materials, or combinations thereof.

20. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 17, wherein the second absorbent core component comprises fibrous nonwoven materials and open-celled polymeric foam materials.

32. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 17, wherein the second absorbent core component comprises fibrous nonwoven materials and absorbent gelling materials.

33. (Currently Amended) The A disposable absorbent article of Claim 11, the article having a first waist region, a second waist region, and a crotch region positioned between the first waist region and the second waist region, the absorbent article further comprising:
a backsheet joined to a fluid pervious topsheet, the backsheet comprising a web and being substantially liquid impervious except at a first discontinuity in the web and at a second discontinuity in the web; and
an absorbent core disposed between the topsheet and the backsheet, the absorbent core comprising absorbent core components
wherein a multi-layered first absorbent core component is non-removably disposed in at least the crotch region and has an acquisition layer and an acquisition/distribution layer, and at least one removable second absorbent core component is removably disposed in the first waist region and is in fluid communication with the first absorbent core component, and
wherein the backsheet further comprises first access means for providing access to the removable second absorbent core component through the backsheet so that the removable second absorbent core component may be removed from the absorbent article through the backsheet without having to remove the absorbent article from a wearer, the first access means comprising the first discontinuity in the web, the first discontinuity being positioned in the first waist region, a first recloseable flap secured over the first discontinuity, and a first fastener for recloseably joining the first flap to the backsheet, and
wherein the absorbent core further comprises at least one removable third absorbent core component removably disposed in the second waist region and in fluid communication with the first absorbent core component and the backsheet further comprises second access means for providing access to the removable third absorbent core component through the backsheet so that the removable third absorbent core component may be removed from the absorbent article through the backsheet without

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having to remove the absorbent article from the wearer, the second access means comprising ~~a~~ the second discontinuity in the web, the second discontinuity being positioned in the second waist region, a second reclosable flap secured over the second discontinuity, and a second fastener for recloseably joining the second flap to the backsheet.

37. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 33, wherein the third absorbent core component comprises fibrous nonwoven materials, fibrous wet-laid web materials, open-celled polymeric foam materials, absorbent gelling materials, or combinations thereof.
38. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 37, wherein the third absorbent core component comprises fibrous nonwoven materials and open-celled polymeric foam materials.
39. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 37, wherein the third absorbent core component comprises fibrous nonwoven materials and absorbent gelling materials.
43. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 11 wherein the second absorbent core component can be replaced by a replacement second core component having the same structure as the component which was removed.
44. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 33 wherein the third absorbent core component can be replaced by a replacement third core component having the same structure as the component which was removed.
82. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 12, wherein the acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers of the first absorbent core component comprise fibrous nonwoven materials and open-celled polymeric foam materials.

83. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 12, wherein the fibrous nonwoven materials of the acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers are polyester fiber materials, polyethylene fiber materials, polypropylene fiber materials, cotton fiber materials, cellulose fiber materials, chemically stiffened cellulose fiber materials, twisted cellulose fiber materials, curled cellulose fiber materials, eucalyptus fiber materials, or combinations thereof.
84. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 12, wherein the acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers of the first absorbent core component further comprise absorbent gelling materials.
85. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 11, wherein the first absorbent core component further comprises a storage/redistribution layer.
86. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 85, wherein the storage/redistribution layer of the first absorbent core component comprises fibrous nonwoven materials, fibrous wet-laid web materials, open-celled polymeric foam materials, absorbent gelling materials, or combinations thereof.
87. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 86, wherein the storage/redistribution layer of the first absorbent core component comprises fibrous nonwoven materials and open-celled polymeric foam materials.
88. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 86, wherein the storage/redistribution layer of the first absorbent core component comprises fibrous nonwoven materials and absorbent gelling materials.
89. (Previously Presented) The disposable absorbent article of Claim 86, wherein the fibrous nonwoven materials of the storage/redistribution layer are polyester fiber materials, polyethylene fiber materials, polypropylene fiber materials, cotton fiber materials, cellulose fiber materials, chemically stiffened cellulose fiber materials, twisted cellulose fiber materials, curled cellulose fiber materials, eucalyptus fiber materials, or combinations thereof.

Amendments to the Drawings

The following changes to the drawings have been made. Replacement drawing sheets incorporating the changes and annotated marked-up drawing sheets showing the changes are included in this submission. No change has been made to any of Figures 11 and 16 through 19. However, copies of drawing sheets 9/12 and 12/12 are included in order to complete the new master set requested in the Final Office Action mailed on 5 November 2003.

Figure 1

- The reference numeral **41** has been changed to **44** in one place in order to conform to the textual description of the rear aperture **44**.
- Another reference numeral **41** has been changed to **44'** in one place in order to conform to the textual differentiation of the front aperture **44'** from the rear aperture **44**.
- An arrowhead has been added to each of the pointer lines for the reference numerals **44** and **44'** to reflect that each points to an aperture, rather than to a surface.

Figure 2

- The reference numeral **41** has been changed to **44** in one place in order to conform to the textual description of the aperture **44**.
- An arrowhead has been added to the pointer line for the reference numeral **44** to reflect that it points to an aperture, rather than to a surface.
- A reference numeral **41** with an arrow has been added in order to conform to the textual description of the rear opening **41**.
- One reference numeral **42** has been changed to **42'** in order to conform to the textual differentiation of the rear flap **42** from the front flap **42'**.

Figure 3

- The reference numeral **30** has been changed to **30'** to reflect that the back panel is a variant of the back panel **30** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- The reference numeral **42** with its pointer line has been deleted to reflect that the originally identified portion of the backsheet pocket **45** is not a variant form of the flap **42** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- The reference numeral **44** has been changed to **44''** in one place and to **44'''** in another place in order to reflect that these apertures are variants of the apertures **44** and **44'** shown

in Figures 1 and 2 and to conform to the textual differentiation of the rear aperture **44''** from the front aperture **44'''**.

- An arrowhead has been added to each of the pointer lines for the reference numerals **44''** and **44'''** to reflect that each points to an aperture, rather than to a surface.
- A reference numeral **50** with a pointer line has been added in order to identify the center section **50** of the absorbent core.
- The reference numeral **60** has been changed to **60'** in order to reflect that the diaper is a variant of the diaper **60** shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 4

- The reference numeral **41** has been changed to **41'** to reflect that the opening is a variant of the opening **41** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- An arrowhead has been added to the pointer line for the reference numeral **41'** to reflect that it points to an opening, rather than to a surface.
- The reference numeral **42** with its pointer line has been deleted to reflect that the originally identified portion of the backsheet pocket **45** is not a variant form of the flap **42** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- The two pointer lines from the reference numeral **43** have been extended to touch the elements identified by this reference numeral.
- A reference numeral **44''** with an arrow has been added to identify the rear aperture consistently with Figure 3.
- The reference numeral **45** has been changed to **45'** to reflect the textual differentiation of the front backsheet pocket **45'** from the rear backsheet pocket **45**.
- The reference numeral **60'** has been added in order to identify the diaper consistently with Figure 3.

Figure 5

- The reference numeral **41** has been changed to **41'** to reflect that the opening is a variant of the opening **41** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- An arrowhead has been added to the pointer line for the reference numeral **41'** to reflect that it points to an opening, rather than to a surface.
- The two pointer lines from the reference numeral **43** have been extended to touch the elements identified by this reference numeral.

- A reference numeral **44''** with an arrow has been added to identify the rear aperture consistently with Figure 3.
- The three pointer lines from the reference numeral **46** have been extended to touch the elements identified by this reference numeral.

Figure 6

The two pointer lines from the reference numeral **46** have been extended to touch the elements identified by this reference numeral.

Figure 7

- The reference numeral **30** has been changed to **30''** to reflect that the back panel **30''** enveloped in the back panel envelope **49** is another variant of the back panel **30** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- The pointer line from the upper reference numeral **38** has been extended to touch the upper portion of the perimeter of the aperture.
- The arrow from the lower reference numeral **38** has been changed to a pointer line and this pointer line has been extended to touch the lower portion of the perimeter of the aperture.
- The reference numeral **41** has been changed to **44''** in order to conform to the textual description of the aperture **44''** and to reflect that this aperture, which is a variant of the aperture **44** shown in Figures 1 and 2, is of the same form as the aperture **44''** shown in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 8

- A reference numeral **41''** with an arrow has been added to identify the opening, which is another variant of the opening **41** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- The two pointer lines from the reference numeral **46** have been extended to touch the elements identified by this reference numeral.
- The reference numeral **55** with an arrow has been deleted to reflect that the originally identified area is not a portion of the fluid pervious layer **55** of the back panel envelope **49** shown in Figure 7.
- A reference numeral **57** with a pointer line has been added to identify the periphery.
- The reference numeral **62** has been changed to **62'** in order to reflect that the backsheet is a variant of the backsheet **62** shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 9

- The reference numeral **10** has been changed to **10'** to reflect that the absorbent core is a variant of the absorbent core **10** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- The reference numeral **50** has been changed to **50'** to reflect that the center section is a variant of the center section **50** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- One of the pointer lines from the reference numeral **51** has been deleted and a reference numeral **51'** with a pointer line has been added to reflect that the lower strip **51'** can vary from strip **51**.

Figure 10

- The reference numeral **10** has been changed to **10'** to reflect that the absorbent core is a variant of the absorbent core **10** shown in Figures 1 and 2 and is of the same form as the absorbent core **10'** shown in Figure 9.
- The reference numeral **41** has been changed to **44** in one place in order to conform to the textual description of the rear aperture **44**.
- An arrowhead has been added to the pointer line for the reference numeral **44** to reflect that it points to an aperture, rather than to a surface.
- Another reference numeral **41** has been changed to **44'** in one place in order to conform to the textual differentiation of the front aperture **44'** from the rear aperture **44**.
- An arrowhead has been added to the pointer line for the reference numeral **44'** to reflect that it points to an aperture, rather than to a surface.
- The reference numeral **55** has been changed to **57** in two places to reflect that the identified element is the periphery.
- The reference numeral **60** has been changed to **60''** to reflect that the diaper is another variant of the diaper **60** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- An arrowhead has been added to the pointer line for the reference numeral **66** to reflect that it points to a region, rather than to a surface.

Figure 12

- The reference numeral **10** has been changed to **10''** to reflect that the absorbent core is another variant of the absorbent core **10** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- The reference numeral **50** has been changed to **50''** to reflect that the center section is another variant of the center section **50** shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 13

- The reference numeral **10** has been changed to **10'''** to reflect that the absorbent core is another variant of the absorbent core **10** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- The reference numeral **20** has been changed to **20'** to reflect that the back panel is a variant of the back panel **20** shown in Figure 1.
- The reference numeral **30** has been changed to **30'''** to reflect that the back panel is another variant of the back panel **30** shown in Figures 1 and 2.
- The reference numeral **50** has been changed to **50''** to reflect that the center section is a variant of the center section **50** shown in Figures 1 and 2 and is of the same form as the center section **50''** shown in Figure 12.

Figure 14

- The unidentified circle representing a roller deflecting the web **84** between the supply roll **74** and the nip roller **91** has been deleted as unnecessary and the web **84** has been straightened.
- The unidentified circle representing a roller deflecting the web **84** between the nip roller **92** and the cut and slip assembly **95** has been deleted as unnecessary and the web **84** has been straightened.

Figure 15

- The unidentified circle representing a roller deflecting the web **84** between the supply roll **74** and the nip roller **91** has been deleted as unnecessary and the web **84** has been straightened.
- The unidentified circle representing a roller deflecting the web **84** between the nip roller **92** and the cut and slip assembly **95** has been deleted as unnecessary and the web **84** has been straightened.
- The unidentified extraneous layer that was originally incorrectly shown as originating from “thin air” immediately to the left of the entry point **100** has been marked for deletion as indicated by small x's. In the replacement drawing, the discrete sections **85** are shown being laid directly on top of layer **82**, instead of on top of the “thin air” layer.

Remarks and Arguments

This submission fully addresses the issues raised in the Final Office Action mailed on 5 November 2003 and in the Advisory Action mailed on 21 January 2004. A detailed discussion of each issue is provided in the sections that follow. Because the amendments and drawing changes provided in the After Final Response submitted on 5 January 2004 were not entered, the basis for the amendments and drawing changes in the present submission is the status of the subject Application immediately prior to the receipt of the Final Office Action mailed on 5 November 2003.

Comments on Amendments to the Specification

Several paragraphs have been amended to correct typographical and/or grammatical errors.

Several paragraphs have been amended to add prime marks to several reference numerals to differentiate variants of several structural elements in the various exemplary embodiments as suggested by the Examiner. These paragraphs are now believed to be consistent with the corresponding figures that have likewise been amended to add the same prime marks to the same reference numerals identifying the same structural elements in the same exemplary embodiments. In some instances, text has been added in order for the addition of prime marks to make sense, *e.g.*, when a previously plural term designated by a single reference numeral has been changed to separate singular terms each designated by a unique reference numeral.

The first paragraph of the Summary of the Invention section on page 3 of the specification as originally filed has been amended to recite that the backsheet is substantially liquid impervious except at at least one discontinuity in the web. Support for this amendment is found in the specification as originally filed, including in the first full paragraph on page 7 through the paragraph bridging from page 8 onto page 9 and in Figures 1 through 5. This paragraph has also been amended to delete unnecessary recitations of “first” and “second” with respect to the absorbent core components that are otherwise clearly identified. Similarly, unnecessary recitations of “first” and “second” with respect to the access means, the discontinuity, the flap, and the fastener have been deleted.

A paragraph on page 8 of the specification as originally filed has been amended to delete references to a flap 42 and to instead refer to the backsheet pocket 45 because the portion of the pocket 45 previously identified in the corresponding figure is not actually a variant of the flap 42 shown in other figures.

A paragraph on page 9 of the specification as originally filed has been amended to delete references to pulling a back panel member through a backsheet opening 41 by a pull tab 46 and to instead refer to simply removing the back panel member in order to simplify the description and avoid any potential confusion of opening 41 with aperture 44. The same paragraph has been amended to delete a reference to a remaining back panel member being urged into fluid communication with the center section 50 through aperture 44 for the same reason.

A paragraph on page 11 of the specification as originally filed has been amended to identify that the embodiment being described is shown in Figure 9 and thereby facilitate its reading.

A paragraph on page 12 of the specification as originally filed has been amended to delete an extraneous recitation that an aperture in the backsheet makes the backsheet liquid pervious in the area of the aperture and thereby eliminate this potential source of confusion regarding the nature of the backsheet.

A paragraph on page 16 of the specification as originally filed has been amended to facilitate its reading by identifying that the strips 52 and 51 being described are parts of the center section 50" shown in the referenced figure.

A paragraph on pages 16 and 17 of the specification as originally filed has been amended to facilitate its reading by deleting an extraneous reference to back panel members 34 and 35, which are not shown in the figure being described. The same paragraph has been amended to clarify that it is the members of a multi-layer front or back panel that may be separated by fluid impervious material and thereby make this description consistent with the delineation elsewhere of the panels versus the panel members and with the depictions of the impervious layers in other figures.

Several paragraphs have been amended to correct the naming and reference numeral designations of particular structural elements, such as aperture 44 and opening 41.

Several paragraphs have been amended to delete unnecessary reference numerals and thereby avoid the necessity of listing multiple primed and unprimed versions of those reference numerals when the description is generic to several variants of the named structural elements.

Comment on New Abstract

A new Abstract has been provided in accordance with the instructions posted on the Office's web site relative to the revised amendment practice, which instructions explicitly state that "[i]f the Abstract is being substantially rewritten, submit a new abstract in clean text (no markings) accompanied by an instruction for the cancellation of the previous abstract." (From Slide 38 of *Slide Set: Revised Amendment Format 37 CFR 1.121 [text version]* (presented 25 September 2003; posted 10 October 2003))

Comments on Amendments to the Claims

Claim 11 has been amended to delete the adjectival description of the backsheet as substantially fluid impervious and to instead recite that the backsheet comprises a web and is substantially liquid impervious except at a first discontinuity in the web. Support for this amendment is found in the specification as originally filed, including in the first full paragraph on page 12.

Claim 33 has been amended to make it independent by including the language from amended Claim 11, from which Claim 33 formerly depended. In addition, Claim 33 has been amended to recite that the backsheet comprises a web and is substantially liquid impervious except at a first discontinuity in the web and at a second discontinuity in the web. Support for this amendment is found in the specification as originally filed, including in the first full paragraph on page 7 through the paragraph bridging from page 8 onto page 9, in the first full paragraph on page 12, and in Figures 1 through 5.

Comments on Amendments to the Drawings

The Examiner's agreement to cut through the accumulated confusion and consider a "fresh" set of drawings is appreciated. It is believed that the changes presented in this submission fully address all of the issues raised in the previous Office Actions with regard to the drawings.

Response to Request for Help in Correcting Specification

In **section 2** of the Final Office Action mailed on 5 November 2003, the applicants' cooperation was requested in correcting any errors in the specification. Such cooperation is gladly given and it is noted that some of the amendments in this submission resulted from such requested scrutiny of the subject Application.